

United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service
375 Jackson Street, Suite 600
St. Paul, MN 55101-1854

Phone: (651) 602-7900
Fax: (651) 602-7914

Transmitted via email

September 25, 2007

MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 300-7-29

SUBJECT: EQIP—NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

Purpose. To distribute guidance on the Nutrient Management Initiative Demonstration Project.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2008

Bulletins 300-7-9 and 300-7-15 briefly described the Minnesota Nutrient Management Initiative (NMI). This bulletin expands on those instructions and other instructions issued informally to area offices.

Crop Year 2007 Demonstration Sites (06 and 07 EQIP Contracts):

1. Participant's final reports are due into NRCS field offices on December 1, 2007. Please follow-up and request these reports from the producer if you have not received them by December 1, 2007:
 - a. Soybean sites - "Crop Management and Harvest Information Form for Maintenance Plots going into Soybeans".
 - b. Corn sites - "Harvest Data Information" form.
2. Reproduce, retain original, and fax preferably or send a copy of the final reports to Mr. Brian Williams, MN Department of Agriculture at: 33315 Sand Prairie Lane, LeSueur, MN 56058 or fax at (507) 665-6806. Mr. Williams will inform you via email that the producer has correctly completed the practice.
3. Complete form 1245 and process the payment to producer after obtaining producer's signature.

Crop Year 2008 and Future Crop Year NMI Demonstrations:

These will continue to be funded with EQIP financial assistance funding and obligated in Protracts with a minimum goal of 50 participants with total maximum participants capped at 100. Project oversight and coordination to be provided by MN Department of Agriculture via agreement with USDA-NRCS.

Eligible counties currently remain the same (map attached) with priority given to fields within the Redwood, Blue Earth, and Root River Watersheds, the South-Central Nitrogen BMP region, and Dakota County.

There will be no continuation nitrogen plots on soybean ground and accordingly no \$600 EQIP payment option in the 2008 EQIP docket.

Primary project coordination and administration will be provided by Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) through a new contribution agreement with the MN NRCS state office.

Brian Williams, MDA Specialist will be the primary coordinator and point of contact for this effort.

Area level training of NRCS staff will also be required.

Selected field offices will have considerably more responsibilities than last year's transition year, including being asked to promote this initiative.

Helping People Help the Land

An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer



A step-by-step process is listed below:

1. Field offices reproduce and provide agricultural producers with the attached brochure.
2. Field offices provide “agreement” form and protocol (attached) to interested producers and advisers, explain initiative basics and EQIP eligibility requirements, and instruct producers to review the agreement and protocol. Have selected producers return signed NMI agreement and “anticipated nutrient applications” form to the local NRCS field office. Detailed protocol questions should be forwarded to the applicable regional NRCS nutrient specialist or MDA specialist.
3. Field offices conduct routine EQIP eligibility determinations to include status as an agricultural producer and ownership or control of land.
4. EQIP contract is developed after “agreement form” is returned to the local field office. A technical determination to see if an individual needs an EQIP demo is not needed. The MN NRCS state office is notified by the applicable field office through the area office to place funding in the respective area or county.
5. FAX a copy of the NMI producer agreement and the “Anticipated Nutrient Applications” forms to Brian Williams, MDA Specialist at (507) 665-6806 as soon as received. The anticipated applications must be reviewed by Mr. Williams and the applicable regional nutrient specialist **prior to any field operations**. This is similar to reviewing a design before a practice is installed. Mr. Williams and the regional nutrient specialists will work with the producer and their crop advisor to correct problems or issues with the planned design and protocol prior to normal producer field operations.
6. Applicable regional nutrient specialists and the MDA specialist perform on-site visits to help with plot layout.
7. Field office insures that producers’ July 1, 2008 submittal date of “Crop Management” information is met. Field office provides copies of the July 1 report to Brian Williams, MDA specialist.
8. Review of the crop management information is performed by the applicable regional nutrient specialist, local field office personnel and the MDA specialist. This review is equivalent to checking a practice installation to see if protocols were met. But payment is not released until harvest information is submitted.
9. Field office insures that harvest information is submitted by December 1, 2008; checks information for completeness and processes the EQIP payment after form 1245 has been signed by the producer.
10. Field office submits harvest information to MDA specialist for economic analysis.
11. Results of analysis reviewed individually with participants by MDA specialist and local NRCS District Conservationist if available.

EQIP Contracting and Program Specifics:

1. EQIP contracts can now be developed for multiple demonstration years if the site will be in corn that year or if the site is a phosphorus site rotated from corn to soybeans.
2. As in the past, a producer can have two demonstration sites (one for nitrogen and one for phosphorus). If they request more than two, the NRCS state office must approve prior to contract development.
3. In any given contract year (fiscal year) the year of submittal of harvest data will be the planned year (e.g., a crop year 2008 NMI site will actually be planned for FY 2009 as harvest and practice completion will normally occur in FY 2009).
4. Process applications and develop EQIP contracts on a first come first served basis if protocols will be met. However, the sixth and beyond applications in any given county will be held without contract development for specified intervals until the total number of applicants in the entire project area are determined and a decision on funding can be made by the NRCS state office.

Field and area office staff should familiarize themselves with protocol procedures and the above guidance. Area level training will be provided as requested by area offices.

Direct questions concerning the Nutrient Management Initiative as follows:

1. The overall nutrient management initiative and processes to Tim Koehler;
2. Contracting and EQIP issues to Myron Taylor; and
3. Technical issues dealing with protocol and plots to Brian Williams at address or phone shown above or at: brian.c.williams@state.mn.us.

/s/

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist

Attachments: Nutrient Management Initiative Brochure
Nutrient Management Initiative Producer Agreement and Protocols
Nutrient Management Initiative Project Boundaries Map

DIST: ASTC (FO)

FO

ARC

APS

Tim Koehler, ASTC, St. Paul, MN

Paul Flynn, SRC, St. Paul, MN

Myron Taylor, SPS, St. Paul, MN

Sid Cornelius, RC, St. Paul MN

Jeff St. Ores, WQS, St. Paul, MN

Rich Giles, Jeff King, Regional nutrient/pest management specialists

Brian Williams, Minn. Dept. of Agriculture